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## REGIONAL COMMITTEE CONTINUES TO EXPLORE THE MERGE OF 3 VALLEY CHAMBERS

**IMPERIAL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, October 30, 2020** – Over the past year the Regional Committee has explored the business opportunity of merging Imperial Valley chamber of commerce's to form one Imperial Valley Regional Chamber. While the invitation was extended to all chambers to participate in the process of creating a business model, ultimately Westmorland Chamber, Brawley Chamber, Imperial Chamber, and El Centro Chamber were the four chambers to have representatives participate in the process of forming a business model. After consideration of the proposal, Brawley Chamber Board has decided to not participate in a Regional Chamber merge at this time. The Regional Committee wishes the Brawley Chamber much success as they continue this next year as an independent chamber!

At this time, the Imperial Valley Regional Chamber Committee is now comprised of Westmorland Chamber, Imperial Chamber, and El Centro Chamber. Due to the change in structure, the Committee is currently reevaluating the financial projections of a three-chamber merge. While the Committee feels strongly that in the future it would be ideal and in the best interest of members to have a valley-wide Imperial Valley Regional Chamber that is comprised of all the chambers in the Imperial Valley, starting with a three-chamber merge for the initial launch year looks to be more financially and operationally viable. "In any new business venture there are always uncertainties, pair that with Covid-19 and you have a new set of unknown hurdles. As a three-chamber merge we are looking at creative opportunities that allow new (non-event) revenue channels that will create a strong financially viable Regional Chamber," said Chair Bari Smith. Independently, Westmorland, Imperial and El Centro Chambers are strong, and successful chambers that have seen continued member growth over the past year. "We are confident that our chambers can continue to succeed as individuals but we are excited at the prospect of how much more we could achieve together," said Smith. We have amazing staff at our chambers and the ideas they are coming up with for a Regional Chamber to reach past our individual borders and support businesses, during this pandemic and beyond, in an impactful way are fresh, new, and exciting!" said Smith.

From Day 1 this Committee has felt that a regional merge should be member driven. We remain consistent in this outlook and are looking forward to including the members of the Westmorland, Imperial, and El Centro Chambers in the decision as to whether or not they are in favor of a Regional Chamber. These chambers will be sending out a voting ballot to their members as well as a summary that will highlight the structure and member benefits of the new proposed Regional Chamber.

"Covid-19 has reeked unprecedented hardships on our business community over the last year and we feel a Regional Chamber is a fantastic opportunity to work together to reduce operational costs while offering more benefits, greater resources, and increased advocacy to our members. However, we feel strongly that this decision ultimately lies in the hands of members," said Chair Bari Smith.

As a Regional Committee we know that the process in exploring merging has been long. We have not wanted to rush the process and have consistently been mindful and diligent in considering data, ideas, and our members throughout the process. The goal date for a decision of Westmorland, Imperial, and El Centro Chambers to merge (or not) is by the end of 2020.

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